NEWSLETTER

1/2009

planning guidelines.

January 2009



EDITORIAL

Despite the economic outlook we wish all of our readers a Happy New Year.

At this time of year our bi-monthly Newsletter becomes an annual round up of the year's activities and is distributed to all households in our area. For those residents who are not familiar with us, it should be explained that, although the name of the Society sounds wide ranging, we are in fact a Residents' Association. It covers an area roughly bounded by London Road, Beckenham Lane, Downs Hill and the McDonalds at the end of Ashcroft Road and includes Beckenham Place Park. We aim to be a pressure group on issues that do, or could affect us locally. That means that we deal with Councillors and Officers of both Bromley and Lewisham.

Enclosed with this Newsletter, for those who do not yet support us financially, is a green slip. If, after reading this issue, you would like to do so, just fill in the slip and post or deliver it to your Road Representative whose name and address are on the slip.

For those who do not know already, it is with great sadness that I have to report that Paul Bennett, who founded the Society, died in November at the too young age of 62. For some time he had been fighting cancer of the colon which had spread to other organs. After many sessions of chemotherapy it appeared that it might have been stabilised, it was not to be. He leaves a wife, two sons and a daughter to whom we have extended our sincere condolences. The Society sent a floral tribute to the funeral and was well represented at the crematorium. The fact that there was standing room only for his many friends and work colleagues speaks highly of the regard and respect in which he was held.

Paul led the foundation of the Society back in 1986-7. The action was triggered by the proposed development of a 4/5 storey block of flats in place of a detached house called Cedarhurst which was just behind Paul's house in Elstree Hill. The formation of the Society was based on the advice from a Lewisham Planning Officer (John Millar - who is now Head of Planning) who said that objections would carry more weight if they came from a residents' association and were based on

Paul quickly recruited support, initially from Elstree Hill and then from surrounding roads. For the first 2-3 years he was Planning Officer for the Lewisham part of our

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area, Minute Secretary, Meetings Organiser, Newsletter Editor and part time Chairman. The only Jobs he did not do were Treasurer and Planning Officer for Bromley.

After a while as the Society grew, he found that he could not do all of those jobs as well as hold down a full time "day job" as an IT consultant at the Bank of America. Progressively he lightened the load until latterly he covered the Planning for Lewisham and was the Membership Secretary. However he was always deeply involved in the various working parties we set up for specific tasks. He will be greatly missed by his many friends as well as the Society for his drive, patience and wisdom.

An article by Leslie Tucker, from an earlier Newsletter about the founding of the Society and the Cedarhurst Saga has been reprinted below.

Prior to Paul's death he had relinquished the Lewisham planning job and Mike Meilniczek volunteered to take over. Mike and Clive Lees, who deals with Bromley planning issues, have agreed that Mike also takes on Ravensbourne Avenue, Ravensmead Road, Downs Hill and Crab Hill. To simplify matters Mike will be known as Planning Officer (West) and Clive as Planning Officer (East).

There have not been any really big issues during the past year but a whole series of new and repeat planning applications and unresolved transport and road issues which have kept the Officers and some Road Reps quite busy. Also, of course, Beckenham Place Park which continues, some 15 years after the Public Inquiry, to be ongoing with no certain solution in sight.

Finally a big thank you to everyone who has supported us actively or passively over the past year. With your continued support we hope that we will be able to report at least as many successes during the coming year as are reported in this issue.

Dates for the Dlary

Thursday 5th March 2009 Annual General Meeting, 8.0pm at Bromley Court Hotel. Thursday 7th May 2009 Members' Meeting, 8.00pm at Bromley Court Hotel.

As usual check the hotel's activities board as, depending on the hotel's bookings, our room may be changed from the usual Wellington Suite for the AGM and from the Ravensbourne Suite for the Members' Meeting.

Peter Pain (Editor)

FOUNDING THE SOCIETY - Leslie Tucker

Apart from a little editing, this article first appeared in our August 2004 issue and is repeated here as a reminder to us all why, and how, Paul Bennett motivated so many local residents to found the Society. This being one of our annual review issues which will be distributed to all households in our area, we hope that not only will this be a reminder of Paul's contribution for those who knew him but also of interest to other residents who might like to know about how the Society came into being and how it has developed.

In the autumn of 1986 a planning application was made to Lewisham to redevelop the site of "Cedarhurst" - an unoccupied detached house off Elstree Hill. A block of flats was proposed. The house could hardly be seen from beyond the boundaries of its garden but the site could be identified from across the valley by the fine cedar tree distinctively rising above the surrounding woodland. Thanks to what followed, this splendid tree still stands to mark the spot.

The residents who wished to object were advised that their case would be more effective if they formed themselves into an association and made a coherent case based on planning rules. This was the impetus which, led by Paul Bennett, ended with the formation, in the summer of 1987, of the Ravensbourne Valley Preservation Society with a membership, (now standing at nearly 500 households) stretching from Beckenham Lane to Ashgrove Road and from London Road to Downs Hill.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOCIETY

Membership grew across the valley as the development boom of the late 1980's brought a flood of new proposals for the area. At first, meetings took place in member's homes. As numbers grew meetings were held in Christ Church Hall until the owner of the Bromley Court Hotel generously offered to provide a room for our regular meetings there.

From the beginning the regular meetings were not restricted to formal committee members but were open to any member who wished to attend or had a particular interest in a current issue. As issues came and went, so those attending the meetings changed.

At its inception the Society agreed a constitution. This was reviewed in 1991 and, due to changing circumstances, was further revised in 1995.

The Society's principal objectives, as set out in that latest constitution are:-

"To preserve the best and improve the rest of the environment of the Ravensbourne Valley and its surroundings and to work for the benefit of the membership as a whole".

To do this we monitor planning applications made to both Bromley and Lewisham which affect our area and consider appropriate responses. These can be supportive as well as critical. We do not usually involve ourselves with applications for minor additions or alterations to individual properties unless they are obviously detrimental to the general scene or unless they might create an undesirable precedent if approved. Of course, if a member is concerned about a proposal nearby, advice will be given if requested. Law & order, transport and other relevant issues are also addressed

Our first duty is to deal with our own area but If major development proposals are made elsewhere which might affect policy principles set down in the Unitary Development Plans of either of the two Boroughs, we are likely to react.

The Society is a member of the London Borough of Bromley Residents Federation which has about forty members representing residents in all parts of the borough.

The officers of the Society are:-

Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer: these are elected at our Annual General Meetings

along with our Auditor. We also have members who take on the tasks of monitoring planning applications made to either Lewisham or Bromley, who arrange meetings, edit the Newsletters, keep track of membership records and act as Society representatives for each of the roads in the area. From time to time other tasks require attention and help is always welcomed. The current holders of these positions are listed on the back page of this Newsletter.

Our Newsletters keep members informed of our current activities. There are at least four each year and usually more. One issue each winter, reporting our activities of the previous year, is distributed to all residents in the area whether members or not. This usually results in tempting a few more residents to become members.

THE CEDARHURST SAGA

Cedarhurst not only prompted the formation of the Society but also provided it with an effective training ground in which to learn some of the intricacies of planning procedure. This "training course" lasted about eight years.

1987 saw three schemes submitted - for 26 flats, then 22 flats and then 20 flats. They were each objected to by RVPS and rejected by Lewisham. Each scheme would have involved 4/5 storey buildings cutting into the skyline. The developer appealed against all three rejections in 1989, RVPS gave evidence against the proposals and the appeal was dismissed by the Inspector.

Later in 1989 another plan, this time for 19 flats in a four storey block, was submitted to, and rejected by, Lewisham after more RVPS objections. 1990 saw apparent capitulation when the developer submitted a proposal for a modest 9 houses. This was unopposed and planning permission was granted. This never again saw the light of day. Instead, two more slices of the salami were produced for 18, then 16 houses. Again these were opposed by RVPS and rejected by Lewisham. Another appeal followed in May 1992 which confirmed the rejection.

The final compromise was reached in August 1992 when approval was given to a scheme for 14 houses by a Housing Association. Building was completed in 1994.

THE CEDARHURST CEDAR TREE

The long battle had not so much been about saving the house itself but about preserving the woodland character of the south side of Elstree Hill and avoiding over-development. But the cedar tree on the site had not only given the house its name but was a recognisable skyline landmark as seen from the valley. The protection of this tree became a battle in itself during the various planning appeals and during construction.

In view of its importance in the first years of the Society it would not have been a surprise if our logo had featured a Lebanese cedar rather than an oak - perhaps it demonstrates that the founders realised that they would be moving on to consider other sites in the future.

Readers new to us will see from the rest of this Newsletter that our work, begun over 20 years ago, still continues.

PLANNING

As you will read 2008 was a surprisingly busy planning year, with many sites having multiple applications plus appeals. For most of them the Society not only organised objections, but also wrote in and spoke for the allotted 3 minutes at the Plans Sub-Committee. The many appeals also took time and effort, not only to write to the Planning Inspectorate but if it was a "Hearing", to also give verbal evidence. Clive Lees our Bromley Planning Officer, has had a busy year and deserves our thanks for his efforts. During the year, after a trial, the society purchased a digital camera and better printer to replace the Planning Officer's Kodak Box Brownie and Xerox machine (well nearly). These have significantly enhanced the quality of our representations to the Council and have had an influence on the decisions of the Plans Sub-Committee.

- 3, Highland Road: After applying for permission for firstly 7 flats, then 6 and a lost appeal, the developer finally got approval for 4 flats. Building work is now almost complete.
- 126, Madelra Avenue: After applying for permission for firstly 8 4 storey 5 bedroom town houses, then 6 and a lost appeal "Hearing" there was a third application for 3 detached houses. That was also refused on the grounds that the access was too long and narrow and that the neighbours would be overlooked. The Sub-Committee meeting was quite dramatic as the owner and applicant, Councillor Dean, actually sat on that Sub-Committee. He had to declare an interest and leave the meeting. To date no appeal has been lodged nor has a further application been made. The house is still on the market however.
- Hillbrow, 14 Highland Road: An application was made to build a flank and rear extension to this locally listed house and convert it into 9, 2 bedroom flats. The application was refused and an appeal was lodged. Before the appeal could be dealt with the applicant submitted revised plans to build a larger rear extension and still convert it to 9, 2 bedroom flats. That application was approved and after a delay the appeal against the first refusal was withdrawn. However it appears that the scheme may no longer be financially viable as we expect a further application to convert the house into a day care centre.
- 113, Foxgrove Road: This property is just within the Downs Hill Conservation Area. A developer submitted plans to demolish the house and build a block of 5 flats. The application was refused and the developer appealed. The appeal was also refused. A second application was submitted attempting to overcome the reasons for the refused appeal. However Bromley again refused permission and again an appeal followed. That appeal "Hearing" was held in early December but the result is still awaited. Before that appeal had been heard yet another application was submitted. Both a spokesman for the Conservation Area residents and Copers Cope Councillors spoke against it. Once more Bromley refused permission. We are grateful to Councillors Wells and Mellor of Copers Cope Ward for their support in opposing these applications.
- La Capannina, Grasmere Road: This is a bungalow between Cameron House and Townend Court. The first application for a block of flats was taller than the two adjacent buildings and virtually filled the site. Two mature trees in the front garden were also due to be felled but this was prevented by Bromley's Tree Officer who had spot preservation orders placed on them. That application was withdrawn and a second, slightly smaller proposal for a 4 storey block of 7 flats was substituted. That was refused by Bromley. The owner of Harcourt House which is opposite the site was very active in drumming up opposition to the application. It was disappointing that Councillor Phillips had written to the Plans Sub-

Committee to say that he had no objection to the plans although he knew that practically all local residents were against it.

- 8, Madelra Avenue: This site has seen 3 applications this year. The first was to demolish the existing detached house and build a 5 storey block of 9, 2 bedroom flats with basement car parking. That was withdrawn before reaching the Planning Committee. A second application was then submitted for a 4 storey block of 7, 2 bedroom flats. Both the Society and Councillor Phillips spoke against and the application was refused. The third application further reducing the occupancy was for a 4 storey block of 4, 2 bedroom flats. This was deferred by the Plans Sub-Committee with a request to the developer to reduce both the height and the depth and to provide more car parking and soft landscaping at the front. A tall order. The developer has appealed on the grounds of non-determination within the prescribed time scale. Any written objections must reach the Planning Inspectorate by the 20th January. Separately a leaflet describing what to do and say will be sent to all affected households. This is an important one because if approved it would set a precedent for more houses to be replaced by flats in a road which is solely 2 or 3 storey houses. If anyone who has not had a leaflet and wishes to object they should contact either Clive Lees on 8464 4699 or Brian Atkinson on 8460 5097.
- 17, Spencer Road: This application was for a new build detached house in place of a garage. The site is on the corner of Spencer Road and Oaklands Road and next to a fairly new terrace of town houses. The development would have been very cramped and out of character. It was refused. The second application was also for a detached house but slightly smaller. That was also refused. The final application proposed to extend the existing terrace with a 7th look-alike town house. This was approved.
- **51, Downs Hill:** An application to enlarge an existing house by building front, flank and rear extensions was opposed. The proposed changes would have made the end result unacceptable in this Conservation Area. Our new Chairman who lives near the site, spoke against it at the Plans Sub-Committee and the application was refused.
- **161,** Ravensbourne Avenue: This application wanted to replace a detached house with a pair of semis. One of the pair was overbearing on a neighbouring property and out of character. It was refused.
- 9, Ravensmead Road: This was a similar proposal to the last a pair of semis in place of a single house. The new pair neither matched each other nor the rest in the road. Bromley rejected the proposal.

Tree Tops, Kirkstone Way: The first application was for a substantial extension which was refused. The second was for a more modest addition to which we did not object. That was approved.

Blyth Road Hotel: This hotel is near the junction with London Road. Demolition was proposed with its replacement being a three storey block containing 9, 2 bedroom flats. Although we objected to the loss of this detached Victorian villa the application was approved by Bromley. Unfortunately this could mark the start of the demolition of similar Victorian properties in the road.

75, Calmont Road: This property is on the corner site at the junction with Hillbrow. The owner had been using the front garden to advertise his "Refresh your Space" business and the flank, in Hillbrow, to keep a skip and building supplies. He did not have permission for this change of use from residential and Lewlsham's Enforcement Officer threatened legal action if the offending items were not removed. The owner has complied.

Billingford, Elstree Hill: The owner built a side extension, barbeque and dining area without planning approval. It also overlooked a neighbouring property. When Bromley's Enforcement Officer visited he also observed that a new front wall was well over the maximum height allowed. An Enforcement Notice was issued for the wall to be reduced in height by the 30th August 2008. Nothing happened. The owner then said he would make a retrospective application for the house extensions - if these were not received, Bromley would issue a further Enforcement Notice. He made his application but it was refused. The extensions should have been demolished by 10th August but a stay of execution was granted if he submitted a revised retrospective application. The extensions have now been demolished. The front wall still remains but a new application has just been made suggesting a "partial modification" - we await more detail and Bromley's reaction!

- 42, Ravensbourne Avenue: This application is to build a bungalow in the rear garden of No. 42. The site can only be accessed through the car park of the Shortlands Golf Club. It is flanked by the river Ravensbourne and access to the bungalow would be very close to the river bank. We have objected because the Bromley Development Plan is quite specific about not approving backland or tandem development. The Environment Agency who are responsible for the river have also objected. The proposal has just been refused by LBB.
- 35. Downs Hill and 42 Madeira Avenue: Unfortunately trees have been lost at both of these properties because they were causing structural damage. Having studied the plans and the reports submitted with the applications we did not raise any objections except to suggest that the owners be asked to plant replacements elsewhere.
- 19, Brackenhill Lane: We made observations although not objections about this proposal to turn the garage to this town house into a room, noting that this would result in a loss of symmetry. Permission was granted.

Mobile Phone Mast: We have recently objected to a proposal to site a telecom mast in the verge at the Junction of Farnaby Road and Ravensbourne Avenue. Bromley are quite strict about where they will or will not allow these installations. The main problem with these masts on or near a pavement is not their height but the antennae array at the top and the large equipment cabinet at the bottom with the visual impact these have in a suburban street. Bromley have refused permission but, doubtless, there will be an appeal.

Tweedy Road/London Road: Although not in our area it is close enough to cause concern. The site is owned by Bromley and is earmarked for additional housing and improved landscaping. It stretches from the County Court to London Road and backs onto Sheppards and Bromley Colleges. An application by Broomleigh for 72 flats housing up to 300 people was rejected by the Development Control Committee as over-development, inappropriate design, too big, out of character and harmful to the amenities of the existing residents living in the adjacent important listed College buildings.

Consultation re Contents of Planning Applications: Bromley have consulted Residents' Associations and others about minimum standards of information which applicants must attain when submitting for planning approvals. We responded with ideas which would make the impact of a proposal much clearer.

Bromley Town Centre Regeneration Plan: The third version of the earlier Town Centre Action Plan is now available for inspection and comment at the Planning Enquiry Desk and in Libraries.

The main changes are:-

Bromley North - Increase in residential units from 250 to around 400.

Hill Car Park - Delete previous proposal for comprehensive redevelopment.

Pavilion - To become Retail extension to the Glades.

West of High Street - Increase residential units from 500 to around 1200. Plus 20,000 square metres of retail space and a new Civic Square.

Bromley South Station - Delete mixed use development. Now refurbish and modernise the station.

Westmoreland Road Car Park - Increase residential units from 100 to about 280.

Proposed time scales are:-

Bromley North - 5 - 10 years.
Pavilion - 10 - 15 years
Westmoreland Road Car Park - 5 years
West of High Street - 5 - 15 years

To conclude Clive Lees would like to thank everyone (and there are many) who have helped him during the year. Particularly the residents and Road Reps who were involved with 14, Highland Road, La Capannina, 113, Foxgrove Road and nos. 8 & 126 Madeira Avenue.

If anyone hears of, or suspects a significant development, please let the relevant Planning Officer (East or West) know as soon as possible.

COMMUNITY PROJECTS

Valley School: As in a number of previous years we have agreed to make a contribution to the school, this time to buy plants suitable to place in or around their new pond. We have also agreed to fund the purchase of nesting boxes for various species such as birds, bats and ladybirds to be placed in their wildlife garden. We hope that this contribution will not only widen the knowledge of the children but also, in time, will establish another wildlife haven in the area.

Queens Mead, Martins Hill and the Ravensbourne River: At the end of 2007 we were approached by the Friends of Bromley Town Parks and Gardens who sought our support for a project to enhance these areas and the river running through them. At the time they had been advised that funding could be expected from the Heritage Lottery - Landscape Partnership Scheme. Both Bromley and the Environment Agency (EA) were supportive and were willing to commit time and funding to the idea. We agreed to become a "Partner". After the pre-application papers had been submitted to the Lottery Fund they were told that the Landscape Scheme was not appropriate after all. It is now recommended that a new application be made to the Heritage Grants Fund. This put back the time table but Bromley and the EA continued their discussions on possible funding.

In the meantime the EA had commissioned Arups to prepare a "Vision Statement" on what might be done. Their brief was to look at the river between the Glassmill Pond and the point where it is culverted to pass under Shortlands Village.

Their proposals are outlined below:-

- 1 Removing or reducing the weir at the pond, dredging and introducing new planting.
- 2 Open up the river culvert at Glassmill Lane to make it look more natural with a footpath partially over the revealed river.
- 3 4 options were included for treating the river as it crosses Queens Mead. Arups favoured leaving the present channel and creating a new meandering path for the river with ecological variety and observation platforms.

A meeting of representatives of Bromley, the FOBTP&G and our Leslie Tucker was held in December to discuss these proposals. The Arup report was considered useful but a number of the suggestions were not considered wholly acceptable. The proposals for the Pond were commented on and some details regarding the planting and future watercourse within the pond would be gueried.

Although welcomed in principle the idea of opening the present culvert in Glassmill Lane was not of first priority if costs were too great.

For the stretch across Queens Mead it was considered important that the present concrete channel be either removed or be buried and a meandering watercourse within a new bunded flood plane be adopted.

It has to be said that, bearing in mind the general financial situation, these proposals are unlikely to be carried out for some time. However as a long term aim they are worth local perseverance.

BECKENHAM PLACE PARK

For those who do not know the Park, it is just outside the Bromley boundary and is managed by Lewisham. There are several access points, opposite Ravensbourne station in Crab Hill, along the unmade part of Ravensbourne Avenue, in Westgate Road, Beckenham Park Road, Beckenham Hill Road and Old Bromley Road where there is a childrens' paddling pool and play area. It is over 200 acres in size, about half of which is an 18 hole municipal golf course, a quarter is grassland and a quarter woodland. It also has a grade II* Listed Mansion and Grade II listed Stable Block and Homesteads at its centre.

During the past year Lewisham commissioned Land Use Consultants to report on:-

- Developing a 9 hole golf course.
- Relocating the car park away from the Mansion.
- Renovating the Homesteads to include: golf management and shops, café / bar, golf clubrooms, function / classrooms, public toilets, visitor centre / gift shop.

The Mansion was excluded because the Council could not afford to repair and renovate it and was considering letting it on a long term lease subject to the lessee satisfying English Heritage about their intentions for the Statutorify listed Mansion.

In due course the consulants produced their report which gave 4 options for a 9 hole golf course, relocated the car park nearer to the Beckenham Hill road entrance and 2 options for renovating the Homesteads including some new buildings on one side to create a courtyard.

All of the proposals were to be the subject of public consultation and that was carried out during the year by Continental Research.

The consultation was divided into three parts:-

- Focus Groups comprising local amenity groups, golfers and Friends of the Park.
- A citizens' day-long workshop with a visit to the Park.
- A general questionnaire deposited in local libraries and also delivered to 18,000 local households, plus some 300 face to face interviews.

In summary the consultation revealed a strong reaction against aftering the golf course, for retaining the Mansion in the public arena and for the proposed improvements to the Homesteads. The point was also made that better signage and publicity would be beneficial.

All of the above was incorporated into a paper to Lewisham's Mayor and Cabinet in December.

After consideration they instructed Officers to:-

- Improve signage and prepare a communications and marketing plan to encourage greater use.
- To further investigate funding for the Park, golf course and the Homesteads.
- Further examine the potential usage and funding options for the Mansion.

Apart from the decision by the Mayor and Cabinet, this Society and the Friends of Beckenham Place Park have been fully involved in the foregoing via the Joint Working Party.

ROADS AND TRAFFIC

Apart from getting a sign erected prohibiting heavy vehicles from using the railway bridge in Downs Bridge Road we have not had much success with our representation to Bromley's Highways Department.

Crab Hill and Ravensbourne Avenue: Earlier reports of plans to make up the unmade sections of Crab Hill and Ravensbourne Avenue up to their junction are now becoming clearer. Bromley have posted a Public Notice about making up Crab Hill, saying where the plans may be inspected and giving a month for owners of premises liable to be charged to make objections. However, we understand from Bromley that the work is to be funded by Transport for London (TfL). We also understand that a similar Notice for Ravensbourne Avenue will be published shortly - also to be funded by TfL.

This raises the question why would TfL fund these works unless it was intended to reroute, in whole or in part, the 354 bus route to create a "transport interchange" at Ravensbourne Station. In the past TfL have promised to consult local residents before changing this bus route. We must keep them up to that commitment.

POLICING

We now have a Bromley Safer Neighbourhood Team consisting of a sergeant, 2 police officers and 4 community support officers. Briefly they cover an area from Waitrose at Bromley South to Shortlands Village and is bounded by Tweedy Road and Kentish Way. They hold regular meeting which we attend.

Currently their priorities are to:-

- Tackle robbery and anti-social behaviour in the Town Centre, particularly in Church House Gardens.
- Establish an alcohol free zone in the local parks near the Town Centre.
- Prevent crime and disorder in local railway stations.

They have also assisted in Operation Blunt II which is aimed at reducing youth violence and knives being carried in London's streets.

Their telephone contact numbers are - 020 8721 2859 or mobile 07887 826 502.

"999" should still be used for reporting crimes in progress or where there is a risk to life.

Non-emergency access to the Metropolitan Police can now also be made on 0300 123 1212.

MISC

(Misc stands for My Idiosyncratic Silly Collection)

"Company Director 50's seeks housekeeper/companion to love in, wage negotiable".

"A husband and wife team have won this year's Town Council Award for their tiresome devotion to Music Week"

"If you need a new system, a useful contact is the Central Hating Information Council".

"Featuring clips from the film classics such as The Snowman and Chitty Chitty Gang Bang"

"The Way to Health" aims to increase the well-being of people who take little exercise by promoting brisk walking on peoples' door steps.

"At the launch of a free magazine by the National Board of the Catholic Woman's League, a priest urged the congregation to go to the back of the church where they could pick up a free Catholic Woman".